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ABSTRACT

This study examined what low income parents perceived about their involvement in their children's education and what teachers needed to know about teaching in urban schools. The study also investigated whether, given explicit instruction and practice, prospective teachers would positively change their perceptions about interacting with low income African American and Latino parents. First, researchers used focus groups to elicit the perceptions of low income African American and Latino parents about their children's education. Overall, the urban parents often felt alienated and unwelcome at school events, though they indicated that some teachers, whom they respected, communicated frequently with them in a variety of ways (e.g., notes home, telephone calls, newsletters, and home visits). Using this information, researchers integrated into an undergraduate elementary method course a variety of learning activities to improve undergraduates' skills at communicating with urban parents. A pre-post survey of 30 undergraduate preservice elementary teachers who participated in the methods program indicated that there was significant growth in their knowledge of how to conduct family conferences, show authentic interest in family involvement, and communicate in various ways with urban families. Appended are: Percentage Rankings of Students' Answers to Survey Items, the Rubric for Parent Story, and the "Family Newsletter." (Contains 20 references.) (SM)

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New Teachers Communicating Effectively with Low-income Urban Parents

Paper Presented at the

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by

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of our work with African American and Latino parents, and the revisions we made to our methods courses to improve new teachers' communication skills with urban families. Using focus groups we learned that urban parents often feel alienated and unwelcomed at school events. But the parents indicated that some teachers, whom they respected, communicated frequently with them by writing notes home, telephoning, or visiting their community. Using this information we integrated a variety of learning activities to improve our undergraduates' skills at communicating with urban parents. Pre/post survey data about those learning activities suggested significant growth in student knowledge of how to conduct family conferences, to show authentic interest in family involvement, and communicate in varieties of ways with urban families. We learned there is no mystery in how to improve the communication skills of new urban teachers, but teacher preparation programs must be devoted to it in philosophy, time, and energy.

Experienced teachers know the value of parental involvement in children's education. Years ago teachers assumed parents supported their efforts in helping children learn -- parents contributed to school events, supported teachers by helping with homework and discipline, and regularly attended parent teacher conferences. But over the years parental support of children's education has become increasingly problematic, with both parents and teachers believing, depending on which side one hears, that schools or families no longer care. A good part of this problem is that enormous social and cultural barriers have developed between many schools and families. As teacher educators we have been particularly concerned about helping new teachers become more effective with low-income, urban families. In this study we report the results of our work to prepare new teachers for more effective communication with low-income urban families.

Parental involvement in children's schooling has been investigated from a variety of perspectives. In one of their many articles, Comer, Haynes, Joyner & Ben-Avie (1996) have shown how parent involvement in the most poverty stricken schools can improve a building's climate and children's academic performance. Delpit (1992) has argued that families should serve as cultural informants for interpreting children's classroom behaviors. McCarthey (2000) has found parent involvement in their children's schooling is influenced by a variety of factors including culture, income, language, and the parent(s)' perceptions of school and family responsibilities.

Hoover -Dempsey and Sandler (1997) identified three psychological factors contributing that contributed to whether parents become actively involved in their children's education, and how these factors are informative in explaining the extent to which low-income families participate in school activities. Hoover -Dempsey and Sandler argue that the family's perceptions of their role and responsibility in their children's education is most important. Middle class parents, for example, feel that they should collaborate with school efforts. However, low-income families often perceive themselves as outside the school system and feel it is the school's responsibility to teach the curriculum. Second, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler identify feelings of efficacy as contributing to parental involvement in school. Parents who believe they can make a difference in their children's education are more likely to visit and participate in school activities than those who feel ineffective. Finally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler explain that some schools are more welcoming than others, and the extent to which schools make parents feel valued contributes to their participation.

We know urban teachers have great difficulty involving families in their children's school activities. Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski and Parker (1999) discovered that teachers often have limited knowledge of what parents do at home to help children in school. Pianta, Cox, Taylor and Early (1999) found that most teacher communication with low income families consists of "low intensity" letters and flyers with little face-to-face interaction with the parents. Moreover, as their number of African American and Latino children increased in a school, fewer "high intensity" teacher contacts with families ever took place. Linek (1997) argued that many urban teachers possess a "We -Them" attitude toward urban parents and do not view them as collaborators in the children's education. Valdez (1996) found that even well-meaning educators do not recognize the impact of family beliefs and values about schooling; consequently, the parent education programs designed for Mexican American immigrants that they studied have done more harm than good because the programs did not build on the families' cultural capital.

Yet there is significant research showing that teachers in low-income schools can become more effective in communicating with families and children. Fundamental to these efforts is the

need to establish respect for cultural diversity and value for different styles of learning and communicating. Au & Mason (1981) found that when teachers' conversation styles match that of the community, children are more able and eager to participate in classroom activities. Heath (1983) discovered that children will achieve more when their home language patterns and values for literacy resemble that of the school. Cazden (1988) showed that teachers who are familiar with children's conversational styles, including the uses of silence, are more successful in their instruction than teachers who are not. Recently, Nieto (1999) and Bloom, Katz, Slosken, Willet and Wilson-Keenan (2000) emphasized the importance of establishing respectful and warm social relationships between classroom teachers, their students and families.

In this study we examined the following questions: 1) What do low-income parents say about their involvement in their children's education? 2) What do low-income parents say teachers should know about teaching in urban schools? 3) Given explicit instruction and practice, do prospective teachers positively change in their perceptions about interacting with low-income African American and Latino parents?

Method

We used two research methods for this study. In the first we used focus groups to elicit the ideas and feelings of low-income African American and Latino parents about their children's education. In the second we used pre/post survey data of 30 undergraduate elementary students who participated in our methods program that integrated theory and practice for family involvement in children's learning.

Data Collection and Analysis for the Focus Groups

Previous research (Gay, 1996; Krathwohl, 1997) indicated that focus groups are a valid and efficient strategy for collecting data and particularly appropriate when eliciting information from marginalized people (Madriz, 2000). Labov (1972), for example, used focus groups in his classic study about the uses of dialect among African American adolescents in Philadelphia. Furthermore we believed focus groups would provide a non-threatening and comfortable social

context for parents because they would have social support and camaraderie of one another when conversing with researchers who were outsiders to their social and cultural community.

We designed our parent focus group to generate discussion with the least intrusion of power elements that might be introduced by us. We decided to use a study room in the apartments where the parents lived which was a block from our college. Methodologically, we placed ourselves in the framework of standpoint research because we viewed this group as constructivist, developing their own knowledge and ways of working with it, both within and outside the group (Olesen, 1994).

We had additional reasons for using focus groups as our research method: The goal of the focus groups was to describe and explain the points of view of inner city parents and teachers about urban education. We anticipated that the social support and camaraderie of focus groups might help the parents when conversing with us, who are college faculty, European Americans, and outsiders to their socio-cultural communities. Furthermore, we thought that our social roles and color might inadvertently serve as a communication barrier between ourselves and the low-income parents we wanted to interview. Consequently, we thought a group interview context might be more comfortable and supportive for the parents as we discussed their children's education.

For two consecutive years we asked parents living in a high-rise public housing project to participate in our study. We contacted these parents through an after-school arts and literacy project in which students from our college tutored children. A teacher from the arts and literacy program served as our mediator and parent contact. We first wrote to the parents that we wanted to know their thoughts about their children's best teachers. We then conducted two focus groups. Seven women participated in the first group, and five women participated in the second. Almost all were Latina and African American.

We experienced some difficulty scheduling the second parent groups. Although the first one proceeded as scheduled, only one parent attended the second scheduled meeting. That parent explained that the others had already attended a housing project meeting the previous night, and

that was why, she thought, no one else came. It took two more weeks before we could identify a night that other parents might come, and at that meeting five parents attended. We met with them on June 10, 1999 and May 25, 2000. We first sent the parents a flyer asking to meet and discuss their thoughts about their children's best teachers. We did this because we wanted to conduct the focus groups in a positive manner and not use the meetings as gripe sessions. At the first year's focus group seven women, including three African American, three Latina, and one European American participated. In the second year five parents attended, three were Latina, one African American and one European American. The majority of the women attending were in their late twenties. A few were in their mid thirties and there was one older parent of about 45 years of age. The first year's focus group lasted for one and a half-hours, and the second about one hour. We contacted the parents through the after-school arts and literacy project where our college students tutored children. Teachers from the arts and literacy program helped us contact the parents, but we also relied on one parent who helped us schedule the meeting nights. When we met with the parents we asked them the following questions: 1) have your children had really good teachers and what were they like? 2) What do you think the principal should tell teachers to assist them with their teaching? 3) What kinds of things should new teachers know when teaching in city schools? 4) What do you think teachers should do to help parents feel comfortable about attending school events?

We divided our research roles for this part of the study. Pete interviewed the parents and Julia served as an outside reader of the field notes. During the focus groups Pete wrote verbatim and paraphrased entries about what the parents said. Afterwards these notes were typed and filled-in with contextual information. Julia analyzed the notes by testing for emerging categories, patterns, and themes that she detected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the first focus group, in particular, the parents built upon what each other said and their conversation became rich and energetic.

Data Collection and Analysis -- Prospective Teachers

Thirty undergraduate elementary education majors served as our second data pool. They were predominantly of Western European descent, but three were African American and two were Latina. These students participated in four teacher education courses that we taught. In the fall semester Julia taught Inclusive Learning Design, and Pete taught Language Arts Methods. In the spring Julia taught Social Studies Methods, and Pete taught Advanced Language Arts Methods.

In the fall semester faculty modeled conversations with parents, including ways for planning and conducting conferences. The faculty introduced and reinforced the concept that parents are their children's first teachers, and they reiterated the value of parents and family involvement in all their course discussions. These courses emphasized the inclusion of children with various challenges in regular classrooms of like-aged children; videotapes of actual inclusion settings where parents are involved in continuous, interactive, and respectful basis were used. The faculty encouraged students in the course, who were parents, to share their experiences with teachers and schools.

During the spring semester we required the undergraduate students to complete specific assignments requiring them to interact with low-income urban, families. One assignment asked them to write a newsletter to urban families about their child's first week in school; this assignment generated from Power's (1999) compendium of strategies for parent involvement. A second assignment required them to develop a parent involvement plan for including families in their children's literacy learning activities. We borrowed a third assignment idea from Edwards, Pleasants, and Franklin (1999) who recommend that teachers learn about urban families by interviewing and writing a "parent story" about the parent(s)' perceptions of their children's learning at home and school. A fourth assignment required our students to attend a community meeting at a local urban school and write their reflections about it.

In addition to the preceding assignments for learning about parental involvement in Social Studies Methods, Julia required them to demonstrate skills in working with parents by: initiating contact with parents, attending a PTA meeting, interviewing one or two (couple) of parents to discuss their goals for their child's learning in school. Students wrote an essay about this

experience for evaluation of this objective. Although this was a regular expectation of students in practica, in the past it has not always been carried out by students. Therefore, a specific expectation was included in the course and discussed in classes.

The Likert survey consisted of 25 items asking students to rank the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the given propositions. We constructed the survey items by examining recently published articles on family involvement in urban schools. We sought items pertaining to teacher collaboration with families, strategies for conducting family conferences, making families feel comfortable in school buildings, activities for encouraging family involvement, and overall attitudes and values about working families and their communities. The survey items elicited our students' perceptions about their knowledge and attitude for working with low-income families (Appendix A contains the questionnaire items).

In September of this academic year (2000-2001) we administered the questionnaire. We re-administered it in late October and then again in March. We used a Mann-Whitney U to analyze their answers to these 25 Likert items.

Results

The data in this section come from the voices of six mothers who participated in our focus groups. The women are as follows: Mrs. Herrera, a Latina immigrant from Puerto Rico; Mrs. Davis, an older African American woman; Mrs. Taylor, an African American woman who recently finished her degree at a local university; Mrs. Howard, an African American woman; Mrs. Figuerra, a young monolingual parent from Puerto Rico, and Mrs. Evers, the only white woman in the group.

The women said they were very concerned about their children's education. They also said that their children have benefited from some good classroom teachers. Several parents, in both the first and second year focus groups, spoke about a kindergarten teacher who was particularly kind to their children; although she was strict teacher, she looked for positive qualities in each child. Mrs. Herrera, said, "Mrs. DeSantis loves children." When asked how she knew that, Mrs. Herrera said, "She hugs and kisses them!" Although this might seem incidental to being a good teacher, the

parents frequently discussed the importance of teachers being respectful and loving of their children. Displaying respect for children and their work such as hugging in kindergarten and praising in upper grades may be more important when teaching children in low income families than middle class ones whose families are already well established and connected in the school communities.

Other parents agreed about their experiences with Mrs. DeSantis, whom they all liked. This teacher frequently sent notes home to the parents. This teacher, Mrs. Evers said, "...affirmed my child...Mrs. DeSantis is really good." Mrs. Evers added that this teacher taught her daughter, Liz, to express her feelings: "Mrs. De Santis drew 'happy faces' on her work ...she sent notes home about Liz and kept me informed." Another mother, Mrs. Taylor said, "She gives positive reinforcement...she recognized my child as 'star of the month!'" They said Mrs. DeSantis even came to visit the housing project to see the after school program. Mrs. Evers said, "Mrs. DeSantis stayed in contact with me, even after Liz was promoted to the next grade... Mrs. DeSantis left space on her notes for me to write back...She emphasized choices for kindergartners. But some people say too rigid...Keeps them at their desks, but I like her."

Parents believed it was essential that teachers were positive with their children. Good teachers complimented children frequently about their work and made children feel good about being in school. Mrs. Taylor said, "I like it when teachers look for the positive in kids... Everyone has something positive...Children pick up on it...Children like compliments...Teachers need to look for the positive." Conversely, the parents repeatedly spoke about how the communication they typically received from school was negative. They shared anecdotes about school suspensions, placement of their children in special education programs, and retention. Mrs. Taylor, a particularly articulate mother, shared her frustration with her daughter's school: She was "...sick of hearing the word 'immaturity'...this word was a code (word) to retain kids... it was used to retain children of color...They track my child by saying she is immature... It is the same negativity!" Mrs. Taylor told the other parents they should not feel "intimidated by school...I know they don't make you feel comfortable...They throw language at you ...How many black kids did

Piaget study? It makes you feel uncomfortable...teachers should communicate so you understand...teachers need to be creative...build on what my daughter knows...I had some fights with her teacher...Parents should not back off...I don't care what they (the teachers) think of me..."

In the second focus group parents shared a coping strategy for interacting with the teachers. In last year's focus group Mrs Herrera said she was nervous and uncomfortable when visiting the school. When she went to the school her English became awkward, and she could not understand what the principal or classroom teacher told her. So this year she brings her own interpreter, a teacher from the arts and literacy program!

Evidently, the school also improved its strategies for working with families from the housing project. The assistant principal, for instance, came down from the school to visit the housing projects several times. He helped with the bus and he removed dead pigeons from under the bridge that were frightening the children. The parents said this "showed that he cared" to come to the river next to the apartments and visit their community.

Parents appealed for good communication skills in their children's teachers. The best teachers communicated frequently through notes and telephone conversations with the parents. Parents liked teachers who sent home weekly newsletters or notes. They appreciated phone calls and loved it when teachers visited the afternoon tutoring program in the housing project, as a guidance counselor and kindergarten teacher had recently done. Parents discussed how communication difficulties were a major problem with their children's school. Mrs. Howard said, "Last year I didn't know that my child was doing poorly...the report card said everything was good, yet at the end of the year, she said my child needed to be left back...this year the same thing is happening... they keep telling me everything is good until the end of the year, he is left back." Mrs. Taylor echoed a similar feeling about her child's teacher, "Same thing with Tonya, I didn't know...they never let you know... never once told me she wasn't doing well...they don't tell me what's going on...this year I know how my daughter is doing." Mrs. Taylor said, "No mother

wants to hear her child is doing badly. I want to know how to help...constructive criticism...come up with a plan!"

The parents said they were often so busy it was difficult for them to visit their children's schools. Of course, there was more to it than that. Many of the parents worked. However, their jobs consisted of low wage, low skill employment. So although most worked, they were employed in poorly paid positions that offered few benefits or security. Consequently, none of them had cars, and to visit the school required a great deal of planning to take time from work and arrange for transportation. It was not simply a matter of jumping into a car and driving up to the school for an hour. Moreover, the parents felt anxious about visiting the school. They generally perceived schools as racist institutions. For example, some parents thought their children were "singled-out" whenever there was a problem in school. Given these issues as well as others, it is no wonder that they have been "always busy" and unable to attend school events.

"Parents have something to do all the time," Mrs. Evers explained. "So teachers should send home notes." "Each child is an individual," she added. "Teachers should call the mother if there is a bad day...maybe the mother can work with the child...they should give information to the mother...let the parent know, nip it in the bud." Mrs. Evers continued, "Some teachers show favoritism...sometimes it is the way they talk with children." Mrs. Davis added, "My child says, 'they dis me.' parents should nip it in the bud!"

We often needed to redirect parent discussion because of the negative tone of much of what was said. During the first focus group parents spoke far more about negative experiences with urban teachers than positive. Unanimously, the parents said they felt unwelcome and uncomfortable in the school to which their children were bussed. They complained that many of the teachers "spoke down" to them, some "brushed them off," and others did not answer their questions. Mrs. Howard shared how she felt a teacher was disingenuous to her and her daughter, Alena. The family has a genetic eye disorder that has been passed down through at least three generations, but she said it had no relationship to intelligence. In February of this year the third grade teacher said Alena needed to be retained. "My child came to school in January, but in

February they told me she should be left back - only one month and they decided this! They never gave her a chance...stigmatized!”

Parents in the first focus group said teachers did not like being questioned about their teaching methods. They spoke about a principal who did not speak respectfully with them. They wished the school used interpreters to help with Spanish speaking parents. All the parents wanted to be part of their children’s education, but they felt excluded because of negative attitudes they perceived in teachers. Mrs. Herrera said, “I feel like dumb going to the school...I’m not comfortable...I don’t feel welcome...They don’t interpret for me...Teachers look at us as beggars...” Parents said the teachers have poor communication skills and lack respect for Latino and African American people.

Good communication skills and respect for children and their families reappeared as the most desirable teacher characteristic for these parents. These qualities ran throughout the focus group discussion and were evidenced in each of their anecdotes. The parents also wanted teachers who knew how to teach their children well. They wanted teachers who would be “kind but strict,” and they did not want their children “babied.” Their children needed to be “pushed to the limit,” but done in ways to make “learning fun.” For example, like learning a “rap song would be fun!” “Some teachers,” Mrs. Taylor said, “baby the kids so much the children believe they are inferior.”

The parents also discussed culture and teaching. Mrs. Taylor said, “New teachers should be aware of not just reading ‘white’ books...they should make an effort to celebrate “Kwansa” because more families are doing it and children should share it...teachers should look into the holidays...they [teachers] should visit here.” Mrs. Figuera said (as interpreted by Mrs. Herrrrera), “It is harder on the Spanish-speaking children to read cursive, so teachers should also print.”

Three important topics repeatedly appeared throughout our with the parents: 1) Teachers need to display respect and love for children. 2) They should communicate frequently with families, and this can be done through notes, newsletters, and telephoning the mothers at home or work. 3) Teachers should visit their community because this shows interest and care for children and their families.

Results from Student Surveys

Frequency rankings on the initial and final surveys are presented revealed that our students valued the involvement of parents in children's education. They most likely gained this knowledge from their prior life experiences and their preceding education courses, such as Foundations of Education. However, after only eight weeks of instruction we found significant difference in their perceptions on two questionnaire items. The first of these item (#19) addressed strategies for making parents comfortable in school ($p < .045$). The second item (#21) item pertained to involvement of children in family conferences ($p < .024$). Table 2 displays the two question stems and Mann Whitney U results for these items.

Table 1: Items with Significant Change on the Pre/Post Surveys between September and October

Questionnaire Item	U Score	W Score	Z Score	p Value
19. (October) I know how to make parents feel comfortable in my school and classroom	526	1466	-1.99	.045
21. (October) I know how to effectively involve children in family conferences.	468	1491	-2.25	.024

Table 2 reveals the results of our analyses from the Mann Whitney U when we compared students' answers on the survey from September and March. The results of this analysis showed difference on seven of the questionnaire items; two of these items were the same as the October results (items 19 and 21 as seen in Table 1 above). We found significant difference on the students' knowledge about knowing how to conduct parent conferences, demonstrating authentic strategies for communicating with parents, knowing how to make parents feel comfortable when they come to school, communicating with minority families, involving children in parent conferences, realizing schools' responsibilities for involving families, and knowing community resources to help parents who have children behavioral difficulties. Table 2 provides the specific Mann Whitney U scores for each of these questionnaire items.

Table 2: Items with Significant Change on the Pre/Post Surveys between September and March

Questionnaire Item	U Score	W Score	Z Score	p Value
10. I know an effective model for conducting parent conferences	204	1332	-4.51	.000
18. I know a variety of strategies for demonstrating authentic interest in a family's education goals for their child.	303	1231	-3.22	.001
19. I know how to make parents feel comfortable in my school and classroom.	385	1151	-2.20	.027
20. I have strategies for communicating effectively with low-income minority families	303	1234	-3.25	.001
21. I know how to effectively involve children in family conferences	348	1189	-2.67	.0074
22. Schools have the responsibility for effectively involving families in children's education	371	1166	-2.48	.013
25. I am knowledgeable about community resources available to parents of children with behavioral difficulties in my classroom	406	1131	-1.88	.059

Discussion

Our study confirms much of what we knew about teacher preparation. Prospective teachers learn best when they actually participate in the application of theories of how to teach. In the case of this study of parent involvement, our students improved in their knowledge and confidence in their ability to communicate with families by having guided experiences conducting conferences, attending after school meetings, interviewing parents, and writing classroom newsletters.

The study corroborates how our own thoughts about teaching and learning have evolved. Years ago as new faculty we unconsciously modeled, far more than we would admit, "teaching is a telling." That is, although we advocated constructivist approaches to teaching and learning, much of what we did in our own classes was "telling" our students about current theory and best practices for actively involving children and families in learning activities. But with time and

experimentation we have seen that learning is best when students actually "do" what we want them to learn. In this study, for example, students grew in their knowledge and confidence on those survey items that pertained directly to course assignments or classroom activities. Our students displayed significant gains in the items pertaining to how to conduct family conferences, display genuine interest in children and their families, communicate effectively with urban families, and make parents feel welcome and valued partners in their children's learning.

The results of our study excite us because they generate directly from our findings with the parent focus groups. In those focus groups the parents told us that urban schools make them feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. In fact, many of the parents said that they deliberately decided not to participate in school events because of their children's teachers did not communicate clearly and respectfully with them.

Before implementing this study we anxiously wondered if we would be able to successfully integrate parent involvement ideas and activities into our methods courses which were already packed with many other curricula objectives. We feared that if we added parent involvement into the courses they would be overloaded with too many assignments and topics. But we learned it was far easier than we anticipated. Our students reacted favorably, too. Our students enjoyed preparing classroom newsletters for families. Many of them were already highly skilled with computers, and they loved designing layouts for their newsletters or using templates in their word processing programs. Similarly, the undergraduates welcomed the opportunity to interview parents about their children's learning experiences at home.

We have learned we can make a difference in our students' knowledge and perceptions about communicating and involving urban families in their children's education. The more barriers that we can remove between schools and families, the better our schools will become.

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Appendix A:

Percentage Rankings of Students Answers to Survey Items

Survey Item	1 Disagree		2		3 Neutral		4		5 Agree Completely	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1. There are limits to how far teachers should go at involving parents in school	21%	31%	21%	8%	18%		31%	45%	3%	
2. Parents have the responsibility for meeting school expectations.	2%	%	2%	3%	18%	20%	31%	44% %		28%
3. Good parenting is culture free.	23%	31%	23%	31%	29%	7%	8%	7%	13%	24%
4. I know about the legal rights of children with learning difficulties and their parents.	8%		16%	17%	26%	27%	34%	49%	16%	10%
5. Parents and teachers are collaborators in children's education.		3%	2%			3%	18%	7%	78%	82%
6. Parents should be involved in school decision making.	2%				8%	10%	36%	45%	52%	45%
7. At best, it is difficult to involve families of at-risk children in school activities.	18%	14%	28%	10%	18%	48%	26%	24%	7%	3%
8. Teachers have the responsibility of helping parents feel connected to their children's schools.			8% %		5%	14%	47%	31%	39%	55%
9. There are a variety of strategies for successfully involving families in school activities.		3%		3%	2%	10%	44%	28%	52%	51%
10. I know an effective model for conducting parent conferences.	28%	7%	26%	7%	10%	10%	21%	51%	7%	31%
11. Parents are usually interested in teaching their children.		3%	26%	7%	21%	48%	47%	31%	5%	10%
12. Teachers must work at involving families in school activities.		3%		7%	13%	7%	57%	38%	28%	45%
13. Parents who are critical of teachers and schools should be sensitively excluded from school events.	50%	55%	26%	17%	10%	10%	7%	14%	2%	3%
14. Parents will become actively involved in school activities when they are heard and respected.	2%		13%		13%	10%	52%	15%	18%	46%
15. Teachers should not rely on written messages to families, but instead telephone and visit.			8%	3%	34% %	41%	42%	34%	15%	21%
16. Written messages to families should in the children's home language.	5%		10%	7% %	34%	34%	26%	34%	23%	24%
17. Parents are their children's first teachers.		3%			25		21%	28%	76%	69%
18. I know a variety of strategies for demonstrating authentic interest in a family's educational goals for their child.	7%	3%	21%	7%	31%	14%	31%	41%	8%	34%
19. I know how to make parents feel comfortable in my school and classroom.	7%	3%	15%	3%	23%	14%	36%	52%	15%	28%

20. I have strategies for communicating effectively with low-income minority families.	7%	7%	31%	10%	39%	17%	18%	48%	2%	17%
21. I know how to effectively involve children in family conferences.	5%	3%	36%	10%	34%	41%	21%	24%	25	20%
22. Schools have the responsibility for effectively involving families in children's education.			25	3%	18%	3%	52%	38%	26%	55%
23. An "us" versus "Them" attitude toward family involvement is acceptable after teachers have done their best to communicate with parents	42%	41%	265	14%	15%	17%	8%	3%	5%	24%
24. Parents are effective teachers of their children.	2%		10%	3%	26%	48%	345	21% %	26%	28%
25. I am knowledgeable about community resources available to parents of children with behavioral difficulties in my classrooms.	10%	14%	25	10%	315	24%	28%	34%	18%	17%

Rubric for Parent Story

Element of Family Story	Satisfactory	Good	Panache!
Family routines and activities with literacy			
The child's literacy history?			
Homelife, particularly in terms of discipline and family relationships			
Teachable moments : examples of when the child learned at home			
Parent/child/sibling relationships			
*Parent's beliefs about their child			
Child's time with others			
Educational experiences at home and community			
*Parent teacher relationships			
*Parents' ideas about school			
The paper reads well and is carefully edited			

Adapted from P. Edwards (2000). A path to follow: learning to listen to parents. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Ms. Ureña's Family Newsletter

For the week of February 5th



February is Black History month! Find out about notable African American leaders, scientists, artists, writers, athletes, and more when you do research with your children!!



Go to
<http://www.blackhistory.com/cgi-bin/webc.cgi/home.html>

You will find important information that will benefit your child and encourage what they are already learning in class.

For the next few weeks, we'll be exploring a theme entitled "Weather Watch." Your child will read stories about tornadoes, thunderstorms, and snowstorms. We will also conduct some weather-related experiments.

Predicting the Weather

Encourage your child to notice signs of a change in the weather. Have clouds covered the sun?



Did the wind abruptly change speed or direction? Has the temperature dropped suddenly? Speculate as to what these changes might mean in terms of tomorrow's weather. Invite your child to test his or her ideas.

This Wednesday is Book Project Day. Please, remind your child to bring the book he/she read to class. Your child needs the book to do the project.

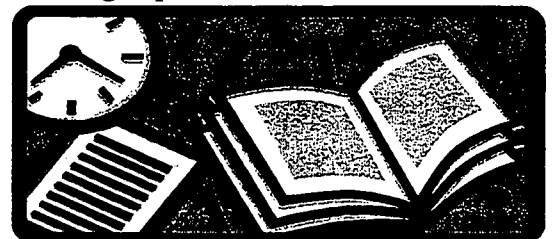


Wednesday is also Valentines Day. We will have a party Wednesday afternoon at 1: 30. Please remember, if your child wishes to pass out valentines he/she must give one to every child in the class.



A class list was sent home last week. If you need a new list, please let me know.

Please continue to study the multiplication facts with your child. Making homemade flash cards is a great learning experience.



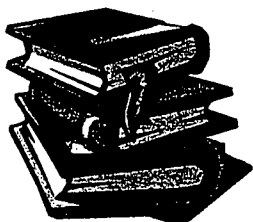
Learn Spanish! Aprenda Español!

Words of the week:

Food: *Comida*



Books: *Libros*



House: *Casa*



School: *Escuela*



Please: *Por favor*

Theme-Related Activities to Do Together

Before the Storm by Jane Yolen. Boyds Mills 1995 (32p) The author describe~ the feeling of a hot sunnier day just before a storm.

Dark Cloud, Strong Breeze by Susan Patron. Orchard 1994 (32p) A young girl and her father have locked their keys in the car, and a storm is fast approaching.

How's the Weather? A Look at Weather and How It Changes by Melvin Berger and Gilda Berger. Hambleton-Hill 1993 (32p) Clearly illustrated explanations of what causes weather to change.

What Will the Weather Be? by Linda Dewitt. HarperCollins 1991 (32p) This nonfiction selection explains how meteorologists record and analyze data to make weather predictions.



Have you read with your child today~

Future Dates



- ❖ February 7th- Freedom Train
- ❖ February 8th and 9th- Parent Conference
- ❖ February 13th Next Book Project
- ❖ February 14th Valentines Day party
- ❖ On March 15th, the PT A is sponsoring a Science Fair. Each family Is encouraged to participate. In class, I will provide suggestions for experiments and displays. If you need any assistance, please let me know.

Have a great week!!





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